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SIPDIS

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SUBJECT: MEDIA REACTION ON SECRETARY OF DEFENSE MEETING WITH
CENTAM MODS, OCTOBER 14, 2005

1. On 10/14 the San Pedro Sula-based liberal daily "Tiempo" ran an editorial entitled "Regional Security." "The Secretaries of Defense and Security of Central America met

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in Key Biscayne, Florida, with the Secretary of Defense of the United States, Donald Rumsfeld, with the main objective of creating a regional security force."

"In this meeting, the first of its kind in the history of North American relations, Mexico and the Dominican Republic participated as observers, while the U.S. initiative was supported decisively by Guatemala, El Salvador, Honduras, and Nicaragua."

"According to information from the international press, the proposal is intended to establish a rapid response force to combat terrorism, narcotrafficking and transnational gangs."

"The participation of the armed forces in this regional security force is interesting, since there already exists a treaty framework for regional democratic security. We suppose that whatever collective agreement emerges coincides with this treaty already in full effect."

"The declarations of Secretary Rumsfeld are opportune in the sense that with more organization and cooperation we can destroy the threats that exist against security `only together we can face these threats.'"

"But the Minister of the Interior of Belize, Ralf Fonseca, has valid concerns when he insists that, in regards to the creation of a regional security force, the role of the armed forces and the military be very clear `to counter the risk of militarizing nations or politicizing the armed forces.'"

Williard